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ABSTRACT

In Cincinnati, Ohio, between 1836 and 1853, controversy over religious education resulted from religious, ethnic, and political factors. Debate began between Catholics (mostly German and Irish immigrants) and Protestants over which Bible should be used in the public schools. (It was accepted that daily Bible readings were to be a part of religious education). A Catholic archbishop urged the use of Catholic Douay Bibles along with the already accepted King James version. In 1840, the school board refused to act upon the archbishop's recommendation and adopted the Bible of the American Bible Society. After 1852, a resolution that students read the versions of the scriptures preferred by their parents was adopted; however, the King James was still the normative version. The 1853 election issue shifted to a debate over state funding for Catholic schools, with strong anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiments. Catholics focused on the rights of parents to educate their children. The election began a wave of success for evangelical Protestantism in Cincinnati and Catholics began to seek other avenues for their political and educational aspirations. (Author/KC)

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BRUSHFIRE WARS: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND EDUCATION IN CINCINNATI, 1836-1853

SP 014 376

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society (New York, NY, October, 1982).

Introduction

"If there is any one point on which the public mind is entirely united, it is, that education to be useful, or even safe, must be Christian. And as the Bible is the only common standard of Christianity, so it can be the only universal textbook."[1] So wrote Benjamin Aydelott, an evangelical minister, in his 1836 report to the Western Literary Institute. Aydelott's position, staunchly held by Cincinnati's evangelical educators and opposed with equal vigor by Catholic hierarchs, was symbolic of the religious tension which was coming to predominate in local educational politics.

Study of religious conflict over schooling in Cincinnati has focused on the "Bible War" of 1869, which helped to shape civil law on the separation of church and state.[2] Such attention is perhaps inevitable given the magnitude of the conflict, and the broad questions raised. The "Bible War," however, was only one incident in the ongoing struggle for religious hegemony in Cincinnati's schools which had begun 35 years earlier. Thus, it must be evaluated in the context of this ever-escalating local tension, and the forces which produced it.

This study will focus on four lesser controversies which occurred between 1836 and 1853. None of these was simply the result of religious ideological conflict; rather, each was sparked by a complex matrix of religious, ethnic, and political factors which placed unbearable stress on the city's social fabric. Only against this background do the dynamics of public and parochial school development fully appear: only within this matrix of forces do major conflicts such as the "Bible War" appear as part of a continual process of change, and not as spectacular but isolated events.

Religion and Ethnicity in Cincinnati, 1840

Religiously, the 1830s in Cincinnati were characterized by the beginnings of

Protestant-Catholic conflict. The flood of immigrants pouring into the city was largely Catholic, including between 70% and 75% of the Germans, and virtually all of the Irish.[3] Substance was thus given to the theme of papal subversion in the West found extensively in the literature of national evangelical organizations, while local Protestant and Catholic papers carried the debate of the credibility of such charges to the larger population.[4]

While foreigners had initially been accepted in a liberal spirit,[5] the attitude soon changed. By 1840, over 14,000 of Cincinnati's 46,000 citizens were German,[6] making them a potent religious and political force. The tendency of German immigrants to segregate themselves fostered suspicion, in turn causing them to organize even more tightly into social clubs and para-military societies.[7] German economic stability during the Panic of 1837 helped to create jealousy and ill-feeling which was tied to their religion, since many of them had deposited their savings with John Baptist Purcell, the Catholic archbishop, making him one of the city's most successful bankers.[8]

With the Irish, the situation was somewhat different. Temperance socieites chided them, and even Purcell was alarmed by their rowdiness.[9] Tracts were circulated against them, and the nativists subjected them to unremitting ridicule.[10] Less of an overt political threat, they were less abused than the Germans, but anti-Irish sentiment nonetheless contributed to the developing anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant climate.

Politically, the latter half of the 1830s also marked the beginning of clear separation of political parties on the basis of immigrant policy. Nationally and locally, the elections of 1836 marked the emergence of nativism as a political force. A letter from Van Buren to the Pope was seen as a Roman attempt to gain political influence, which the Whigs feared that Democrats would seize the votes

of German citizens.[11] Van Buren's victory, achieved with immigrant support, was an early indication of the marriage of the foreign born to the Democrats.

Thus it was that tension between native Americans and immigrants began to increase in the 1830s for political and religious reasons. Fueled by the pan-Protestant rhetoric of the evangelical press, the fires of religious conflict began to generate increasing heat.

The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers: The Debate over the Bible in the Common Schools

It was in the 1836 meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers that the issue of Bible usage in the common schools first came into view. This organization, founded in 1832, met for several days each year to debate topics of educational interest. Cincinnati was its birthplace and meeting site until 1842, and it involved both local and national leaders.[12]

Despite a generally Protestant character, the College included prominent individuals of all persuasions. Thus it was that Archbishop Purcell was invited to address it on the subject of "The Philosophy of the Mind" in 1836. Before he began his address, however, Purcell took the opportunity to reply to Rev. Joshua Wilson, a Presbyterian minister who had just advocated the universal use of the English bible in the common schools.[13]

At the same meeting, an official report concerning use of the Bible in the schools had been made. Addressing the assembly, Rev. Benjamin P. Aydelott spoke on "The Best Method of Prosecuting the Study of the Bible in the Common Schools." Aydelott, an Episcopalian turned evangelical Presbyterian, was active in the group which dominated the city's common schools. Dismissing the option of composing a reader of selections from the Bible, Aydelott insisted that only the whole book could cover the ground of necessary moral teaching, as well as that the Bible was

the common document of American education.[14]

Purcell took immediate exception in his reply to Wilson. Rather than delay the meeting with an unscheduled and potentially explosive debate, the College named Purcell and Aydelott to a committee to study the matter, and report back in the following year.[15]

Purcell felt a strong bias in the the College's position on all of this. Writing to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore after the 1836 meeting, he commented:

> If any of our city papers reach the Metropolis you will perceive that I wd. not let this immense new Lever, the Western Literary Institute & College of Teachers have it all their way this time.[16]

Seeing the forthcoming debate over the Bible in the public schools as critical, he sought to enlist the support of two national Catholic leaders.

His first sounding board, Fr. John Hughes of New York, offered little encouragement. While Purcell felt that the College of Teachers could be brought around to the Catholic position,[17] Hughes saw any such solution as impossible. Responding to Purcell, he insisted that Catholics obliged to maintain total doctrinal integrity had nothing to gain from compromise with Protestants. Even the use of Catholic Douay Bibles with appropriate notes was to be forbidden, in his opinion, if these had been given by Protestant societies.[18]

Purcell received another blow from the liberal bishop of Charleston, John England. Had England accepted an College of Teachers' invitation to speak, Purcell would have had the physical presence of a powerful ally. However, England declined, citing the pressure of work and pessimism about the value of cooperation with the College:

> I am under the impression that the body is like all others of a similar description that I know in this country, one more for private than for public benefit. And the men who compose the committees, persons who are not quite in love with Catholic doctrines or persons.[19]

Two of American Catholicism's most prominent educational spokesmen thus abandoned

Purcell to his fates.

Nonetheless, he attended the 1837 meeting of the College. Since he and Aydelott had been unable to reach agreement, they wrote separate reports. Purcell argued against both the use of the entire Bible and a book of selections, insisting that the heterogeneous character of the American population made the whole Bible unacceptable, and to be content with a book of selections would cause great loss of value.[20] To introduce scripture without proper safeguards in any form, he argued, would:

> . . . perpetuate bad feelings, religious rancor, disgusting controversies—in a word, the most hateful display of the worst passions of our nature, and all this among fellow-citizens who should be united, heart and hand, for the maintenance of one common interest; and instead of the nations of the earth reading, with a holy emulation to be like unto us, the glorious words "LIBERTY AND EQUALITY" inscribed in large and legible letters, on the cupola of the Temple, they will cast their eyes downwards and weep, that odious INTOLERANCE, SECTARIANISM, AND BIGOTRY are blazoned there![21]

Instead, Purcell proposed what amounted to a system of released-time instruction for common school children.[22]

Aydelott, like Purcell, was opposed to a book of biblical selections.[23] However, he argued that the entire Bible is necessary for thorough education, insisting that it be used on a daily basis. He went on to define "Bible" as "the common English version, or that effected by the public authority in the reign of James the First,"[24] thereby equating scripture and Protestant Christianity.

Both reports were discussed by the College, which then adopted by unanimous vote a resolution of Rev. Benjamin Huntoon, a Unitarian minister:

> Resolved, that this Convention earnestly recommend the use of the Bible in all our schools, to be read as a religious exercise, without denominational or sectarian comment, and that it is the deliberate conviction of this College, that the Bible may be so introduced in perfect consistency with religious freedom and without offense to the peculiar tenets of any Christian sect.[25]

A proposal by Huntoon to allow teachers to interpret the scriptures for their

pupils,[26] however, was beaten back by the interesting coalition of Purcell, Lyman Beecher, and Calvin Stowe.[27]

Reporting to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith at Lyon after the meeting, Purcell commented:

> Everyone seemed to like my proposal that neither teachers nor anyone else, should ever speak about doctrine; but that the students of each sect should be gathered, separately, two or three times a week, in a special room, there to be instructed in their faith by their own ministers.[28]

What he failed to realise was that no consensus had been reached. While some may have liked his proposal, the resolution passed made no mention of it. Instead, the College had opted for scripture without comment, violating the Catholic tradition of requiring a Catholic edition with appropriate notes.

The School Board and the Bible: The 1842 Controversy

Having succeeded (or so he thought) in the College of Teachers, Purcell approached the School Board itself in 1842 for a resolution to what he felt were religious problems in the schools. In a letter to the Board president, he made three complaints. First of all, textbooks contained "obnoxious passages" about Catholicism. Second, Catholic children were being required to read the King James Bible. Finally, Catholic children, without parental approval, had access to district libraries which, he felt, contained objectionable books.[29]

Ever the diplomat, Purcell took the tack of a private approach *via* the Board's president. Indications exist that the question had already been discussed informally by the Board,[30] which now settled the issue with dispatch. At its meeting of August 29, the Board passed the following resolutions:

> 1. Resolved, that the President of the board be requested to inform Bishop Purcell, that he is invited by the Board, to examine the books used in the English Common Schools, and the German Common Schools, or to cause them to be examined, and all obnoxious passages pointed out.

2. Resolved, That no pupil of the Common Schools be required to read the Testament or Bible, if its parents or guardians request that it be excused from that exercise.

3. Resolved, That no child be allowed to take books from the district libraries, unless, at the beginning of each session, its parents or guardians make the request, in writing or in person, that it may have that privilege.[31]

Unfortunately, the Board resolution went ignored. Thus, in 1847 the Catholic Telegraph spoke about a common school teacher who "informed Catholic pupils that they must supply themselves with Protestant editions of the New Testament."[32] That this was not an isolated action is indicated by the 1847 Schedule of Textbooks, which lists the "Bible, Ed. of Am. Bible Soc.,"[33] and the Annual Report for 1849: "The reading of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, is required as a daily exercise in our schools."[34] As a result, the way still lay open for future conflicts which would be of a far more serious nature.

The School Board and the Bible: The 1852 Controversy

Still greater shifts in political and ethnic Cincinnati had occurred in the years after 1840. The arrival of the radical "Forty-eighters" gave strength to the anti-Catholic movement, as did increased immigration of German Jews, since the latter tended to ally themselves locally with the radicals and Know-Nothings.[35]

Both local and national politics had come to involve ethnicity and religion. Locally, the Democratic Party had been split by the exposure of the "Miami Tribe," a secret Democratic clique founded in 1851 to pick candidates in order to neutralize the pro-German and anti-slavery elements in the party.[36] Predictably, the Germans bolted, giving their support to the anti-Miami "Sawbuck" coalition,[37] which threw many of the October races to the Whigs.

Nationally, religion was a campaign issue. The Democratic presidential nominee, Franklin Pierce, was from New Hampshire, the last state in which Catholics were proscribed. The Whigs played this issue to the hilt,[38] with Winfield Scott,

their candidate, being portrayed as pro-Catholic.[39]

Given this climate, it is not surprising that the second round of the fight over Bible use in the common schools was bloodier than the first. In the summer of 1852, the issue came to the fore once again.

After conversations with Catholic authorities, Dr. Jerome Mudd, a Catholic member of the School Board, decided to force the issue, and introduced the following resolutions:[40]

> Resolved, I. That, as it is the opinion of this Board, that the Bible never can be dispensed with, in the education of the young, (See Report, June 30th, 1851, page 11) the existing rule requiring the edition of the "American Bible Society," be so altered and amended, as to authorize the introduction of the edition of the Bible used by the Catholics, as, also, that preferred by the Jews.
>
> Resolved, II. That, from and after the commencement of the next scholastic year, "All such children, as are by law, entitled to the benefits of the Common School Fund instruction in said City," be, and are hereby authorized to take to the public schools, and read the edition of the Bible selected by their parents or guardians.
>
> Resolved, III. That the Professors and Teachers in said schools, shall be, and are hereby authorized to read before their classes, such edition of the Bible, and without reciting the notes, or comments, as may comport with their views of religion.[41]

The Board's initial response was to remand the resolutions to the Committee on Textbooks. When the Committee reported to the entire Board, it was found that the seven members had split three different ways.

A majority presented a report which argued for the use of the King James Bible in classical evangelical terms. To introduce the Douay Bible into the schools would cause chaos, and be an introduction of sectarian religion.[42] They further insisted that "ours is essentially a Protestant country."[43]

Mudd took exception to the entire report, and attempted to rebut it. Reminding the Board that not all Protestants supported the King James Bible, and that Jews opposed the New Testament, he argued:

> . . . the mere fact of introducing one of these versions into the schools, to the exclusion of the others, as a part of the course of study, is in fact and in truth, an attempt to impose the Bible of one Christian denomination, on another denomination without their consent, and is to introduce into the schools that which has a tendency to produce an influence of a sectarian character; and thereby "a preference is given, by law, to some religious society; and an interference with conscience is permitted."[44]

Mudd went on to challenge the majority to offer legal proof that the United States is a Protestant nation, and pointed out that similar resolutions to his had been adopted by other cities with no ill effects.[45]

Mudd was not the lone dissenter. Filing a second minority report, two members formulated another resolution:

> Resolved, that the pupils of the Common Schools have permission to read such versions of the Sacred Scriptures as their parents may prefer, provided that such preference to any version, except the one now in use, be communicated by the parents to the Principal Teachers, and, that no notes or marginal readings be read in schools, or comments made by the Teachers on the text of any version that is, nor may hereafter be introduced.[46]

This resolution represented an obvious attempt to present a compromise solution.

In this divided state, the Committee forwarded its three reports to the Board.[47] The matter, meanwhile, had become an item of public interest, with Rev. N.L. Rice lecturing on the evening before the Board's deliberations on Catholic anti-biblicism, and insisting that the King James Bible was vital to the preservation of common schooling.[48]

On October 1, the Board took up the question of the various reports. After a debate of nearly three hours, the majority report was adopted by a vote of 15 to 13, although a slightly amended version of the second minority resolution was defeated because of a tie vote.[49]

The Protestant majority was obviously not a strong one and so, it was no surprise when the question arose again. On October 15, Dr. Boyd offered a successful motion to revive the question, and make it the special business of the following

meeting. Dodging the political "hot potato," the Board proceeded to table it for the two following meetings.[50]

Finally, on November 1, Boyd offered a resolution allowing children to use whatever version their parents wished, provided it did not contain notes or comments. Mudd objected on the grounds that no Catholic edition met these conditions, and suggested the second minority's original resolution as a substitute, to which Boyd assented. The question was put, and the resolution passed, 15 to 10.[51] A compromise allowing for the use of Catholic scripture had become common school policy.

Lack of editorial comment in the secular press suggests that the final decision was generally well received. The religious press reacted predictably. The evangelical Western Christian Advocate asked whether the Catholic Church would now furnish Douay Bibles without notes for the children, or else allow them to be furnished by Protestant sources, pointing out that refusal would negate the resolution.[52] The Catholic Telegraph was predictably positive. After pointing out that the resolution merely gave children their constitutional rights, it nonetheless praised the Board, seeing the decision as a triumph for justice and Catholicism.[53]

The Ohio Journal of Education, an organ of the pan-Protestant establishment, echoed the evangelical position. The King James Bible was seen as capable of furnishing information on every topic of importance, and its use as an example of the most enlightened pedagogy. The magazine also equated its use with the advancement of civilization:

> . . . the people whose education is most completely under the influence of the Bible, have the most strength of intellect, and stability and purity of moral character. They are, as a mass, most intelligent, prosperous and happy. A single glance at the contrast between Scotland and Spain, England and Italy, North and South America, furnishes abundant proof.[54]

The depth of feeling indicated in this periodical points up the seriousness with which the Bible issue was viewed by the region's educators, who saw the schools and Protestant Christianity as partners in national development.

The Board resolution of 1852 was the most effective attempt at compromise to date., but the solution left much to be desired. Although dissenters were allowed to use whatever edition of the Bible they wished, the King James was still the normative version. While the Board had attempted to remove that which was most offensive, Bible reading still continued as a regular exercise in the fundamentally Protestant common schools.[55]

The Ongoing Fight Over Funding, 1853

While the uses of the Bible in the common schools were debated and resolved, the question of the state's relation to parochial education was rising to the fore. This issue, too, arose in the context of growing German political power.

That Germans had become a major factor in the city's political equation became clear in the local elections of 1852. Those Democrats who distanced themselves from the "Miami Tribe" were supported by the Germans and generally won, while nativist Democrats consistently went down to defeat at the hands of German supported Whigs.[56] As the Gazette remarked, the triumph of the "anti-Miami" coalition was "to use the eloquent language of the Miamis, mainly owing to the damn Dutch."[57]

It was in this atmosphere that the spring elections of 1853 developed into an intense confrontation between immigrants and native Americans over state funding for Catholic schools. The matter of taxation to support education was one upon which Catholics had definite feelings. Repeatedly, the Telegraph had condemned laws which required Catholics to support a de facto Protestant school system, and their own in addition,[58] keeping the issue in front of Catholics through

the period.

The opportunity to challenge the existing situation arose in March of 1853, as the state legislature debated a new school law. After opening volleys in which it attacked the state schools for pretending to be the only American system and state government for supporting them,[59] the Catholic Telegraph proposed what amounted to a primitive form of voucher system.[60] That the paper was functioning as the archbishop's public voice become obvious when he presented the legislature with a petition, signed by 800 Catholics, requesting an amendment to the school law acknowledging the right of parents to educate their own children.[61]

The Protestant press reacted vigorously. Since early in the year, the Western Christian Advocate had expressed concern about Catholic pressure for a share of tax revenue.[62] Now, it attacked Catholics for their non-support of public schooling. Combining anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiments, the paper remarked:

> Nothing but an entire and utter control of the schools of the country will satisfy its [the Catholic Church's] longings. This, at the risk of bloodshed, the Romanists are determined to accomplish. How would it look for a gang of Americans to go to some foreign country and pledge themselves as good citizens, but as soon afterwards as possible set up a claim against the government, and give out threats that they would have that claim satisfied? So act the minions of the Pope here, and they are ready to wade in blood knee deep, provided their ends are accomplished. Already, in this city, they have commenced canvassing the wards, and are preparing to open the war, the first fire of which is to be heard in the coming spring elections.[63]

The secular press also arrayed itself against Purcell and his proposals. For the Gazette, Purcell's action was simply an attempt to strengthen the weakening hold of the clergy on the Church's membership, and on local politics.[64] While the Commercial announced that it would abstain from involvement in the controversy, it also opined:

> We do not believe that these religious controversies are productive

> of any good, either to the cause of vital piety, or the moral tranquility of the community. We believe that they originate rather in the passions and prejudices of individuals, than in any higher and purer feeling which frequently urges men in their various crusades.[65]

Even the Enquirer, the city's one Democratic and pro-immigrant paper, attacked Purcell for threatening the common school system, "which far transcends the scope of narrow-minded and intolerant sectarianism."[66]

Only the Catholic Telegraph supported the archbishop. In several editorials, it condemned the despotic power of the state which sought to interfere in the sacred parental rights of education:

> Let them drag the child from the parental roof—as the property of the State—badly treated by the present trust holder; the natural heart will cry out against it—parental love will stimulate to right action, and the system will be reprobated by all but office holders, infidels, and fanatics.[67]

The attempt to amend the school law failed, seemingly because it appeared to involve the funding of sectarian religion by the state.[68] However, the passage of the unamended law was the beginning rather than the end of the controversy.

Earlier the Catholic Telegraph had stated that "should it [the school law] pass in its present shape, we promise beforehand to those who vote for it, all the political hostility which we can combine against them."[69] Now, the Catholics of Cincinnati began to make good on the promise, with organized demonstrations and speeches protesting the law.[70] Counterdemonstrations, in turn, were organized by the opposition, moving the issue further into the public arena.[71] What the Ohio Journal of Education had feared, the rise of an election year controversy involving religon and schooling, had finally occurred.[72]

The conflict was further intensified by a legislative attempt to force Catholic parents to enroll their children in the public schools for three months of the year, or pay a $20 fine for each offense.[73] Replying to this new threat,

Purcell flung the defiant challenge:

> For ourselves, we can only say that as guardians of some 300 orphans, we pray God to permit our lives be trampled out by a mob in the streets of the Queen City before we obey it, if it be ever sought to be enforced.[74]

Although nothing came of this, it further inflamed the tense religious situation.

The drive to affect the spring elections climaxed in a pastoral letter issued by Purcell. Replying to charges levied against him, Purcell stated his case in eight propositions: 1) Catholics were not opposed to common schooling; 2) Catholics would cheerfully provide tax support for such schools; 3) there was a genuine desire on the part of Catholics to utilize the system; 4) the term "common school" was really a misnomer, since such schools were really not open to Catholic youth; 5) the King James Bible was still in use; 6) the sytem's teachers were Protestant and the textbooks frequently anti-Catholic; 7) in the coming election, Catholics should be willing to become a voting minority to maintain their principles; and 8) Ohio was proving itself more despotic than the monarchies of Europe.[75]

In a ringing conclusion, Purcell suggested a course of action which set the torch to the waiting tinder:

> Surely it is not our aim to detach them [the Catholics] from the the (sic) political parties to which they have conscientously attached themselves. But if those parties value their support, and deserve to receive it, they will pledge themselves to redress the grievances of which they so justly complain. And if they refuse to do so, they cannot complain if Catholics are equally independent, and refuse to them their suffrages.[76]

While the Telegraph had earlier insisted that Catholics had no desire to form a separate political party,[77] Purcell's exhortation to bloc vote seemed precisely that.

Protestant and secular papers alike responded angrily to the archbishop's overt politicism. The Western Christian Advocate saw his action as the last gasp

of a dying religion, while the Gazette took him to task for his lack of coherent argument and his appeal to prejudice.[78] Even the more muted Commercial called his efforts an attempt "to promote, not religious knowledge in any general sense, but the interest of . . . a sect."[79]

From the time of Purcell's letter to the date of the election, the city's press futilely appealed to the populace to let reason guide their actions.[80] The Democratic slate, however, had become known as "the Pope's Ticket," and its candidate for mayor was accused of being any enemy of the common schools.[81] Religion and schooling had become the major, if not only, issue of the election.

Because the election results were not clear-cut, both Catholics and evangelicals claimed victory. Somewhat half-heartedly, the Telegraph professed satisfaction that the defeated Whigs had been among the most anti-Catholic of the candidates,[82] at the same time pointing out to "young," "native-American," "liberal" Catholics the folly of thinking that accommodation could be reached with the Protestant-dominated society around them.[83]

The Western Christian Advocate, on the other hand, saw the election as a "Defeat of the Pope in Cincinnati":

> Both Democrats and Whigs, where the schools were concerned, forgot their peculiarities and voted for the schools. Some of the Catholics—how many we know not—took the same noble ground, and declared by their votes that, though they were Catholics, they were not Papists.[84]

Commenting at length on the voting patterns, the Advocate saw the defeat of Roman interests as the dawning of a new day.[85]

Perhaps the best assessment was made by the Enquirer. Desertion of the Democratic party by radical Germans had cost it several city offices. While 16 of the 20 regular Democrats were elected, it was an uneasy victory, with several offices going to Democrats only because the anti-Catholic vote had been split

between several candidates.[86]

More importantly, the campaign marked the first occasion on which a Cincinnati elected had focused on the single issue of religion.[87] The ideological conflict which had been brewing had come into the open and the kind of accommodation which had been attempted in earlier disputes was no longer possible, as the fires of nativism, fueled by economic, political, and religious rivalries blazed in Cincinnati. The Catholic community was fast becoming a beleagured minority.

Conclusion

The elections of 1853 were the beginning of a new wave of success for evangelical Protestantism in Cincinnati. In December, the Papal Nuncio, Gaetano Bedini, appeared in Cincinnati, bringing on a wave of rioting and hatred the like of which the city had never before seen.[88] The Enquirer fittingly remarked that "Everything for a long time has been tending toward violence and outrage."[89] The clash between religious ideologies, in which schooling was a major factor, had blossomed into full scale civic strife. That education was the battleground is not surprising. Highly valued for its formative role, schooling was seen as a major weapon in the struggle for souls.

The worst, however, was still to come. In 1869, a "Bible War" would nearly destroy the already tattered fabric of local education. This "war," however, did not appear out of the blue. Rather, it was a focal point in a process which had begun in the earlier struggles, and which was as much related to politics and ethnicity as to religion itself. The product of a complex matrix of forces, Cincinnati's early school conflicts increased as society itself became more pluralistic. The era described by Lyman Beecher as a time to favor Zion was one of of growing consolidation of common schooling, but at an expensive price. Alienated from the Protestant paideia which dominated the city's social institutions, Catholics would increasingly seek other avenues for their political and educational aspirations.

NOTES

[1] Transaction of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers—hereafter cited as WLI—4 (1836), p. 197.

[2] The best of these is Robert Michaelsen's "Common Schools, Common Religion?" Church History 38 (1969), pp. 201-17, later expanded in Piety in the Public Schools (New York, 1970).

[3] Charles Cist, Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects (Cincinnati, 1841), pp. 37-38.

[4] E.g., Catholic Telegraph, Dec. 17, 1831; July 28, 1832; Western Christian Advocate, Jan. 30, Feb. 20, 27, 1835.

[5] William A. Baughin, "Nativism in Cincinnati Before 1860." (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1963), p. 32.

[6] Charles Theodore Greve, Centennial History of Cincinnati (Chicago, 1904), 2: 685.

[7] Henry A. and Kate B. Ford, History of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, 1881), p. 129.

[8] Purcell's financial maneuvering would eventually result in a multi-million dollar loss, occasioning lengthy litigation and driving some Germans from the Church as a result. Cf. M. Edmund Hussey, "The 1878 Financial Failure of Archbishop Purcell," The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin, 36 (Spring, 1978): 7-41.

[9] Bishop Purcell's Journal, 1833-36, printed in the Catholic Historical Review, 5 (1919-20): 247.

[10] Catholic Telegraph, July 11, 1840.

[11] Baughin, "Nativism in Cincinnati," p. 38.

[12] Roman J. Schweikert, "The Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers," (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1971), pp. 23-25.

[13] WLI 4 (1836), pp. [illegible]-66.

[14] Ibid., pp. 197-98, 200.

[15]Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati: the Pre-Civil War Years." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1959), p. 191.

[16]Purcell to Eccleston, Oct. 8-13, 1836. Cited in Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," p. 188.

[17]Purcell to Hughes, June 17, 1837. Ibid.

[18]Hughes to Purcell, June 27, 1837. Box II, University of Notre Dame Archives—hereafter cited as UNDA.

[19]England to Purcell, July 1, Aug. 16, 1837. Box II, UNDA.

[20]WLI 5 (1837), pp. 118-20.

[21]Ibid., p. 120.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., pp. 122-26.

[24]Ibid., p. 121.

[25]WLI 5 (1837), pp. 12-13.

[26]Catholic Telegraph, Oct. 12, 1837.

[27]Purcell to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Oct. 27, 1837. Cited in Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," p. 197.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Cf. Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of School Trustees and Visitors (1853), pp. 11-12, for details.

[30]E.g., Catholic Telegraph, April 15, 1847.

[31]Cf. Reports of the Committee of the Board of School Trustees and Visitors on Textbooks, Aug. 31, 1852, p. 24, for the text of the 1842 resolutions.

[32]Catholic Telegraph, April 15, 1847.

[33]Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of School Trustees and Visitors (1847), p. 31.

[34]Nineteenth Annual Report of the Board of School Trustees and Visitors (1848), p. 5.

[35]Baughin, "Nativism in Cincinnati," p. 127.

[36]Enquirer, July 13, 18, 1852.

[37]Cf. Most July and August, 1852, issues of the Enquirer for details.

[38]Cf. Commercial, Enquirer, and Gazette, June to October, 1852, for the debate about Pierce's role in promulgating the New Hampshire constitution.

[39]Commercial, Oct. 7, 1852; Enquirer, Oct. 7, 1852.

[40]Catholic Telegraph, Nov. 13, 1852.

[41]Gazette, Oct. 2, 1852.

[42]Report of the Committee on Textbooks, pp. 6-11, 13.

[43]Ibid., p. 12.

[44]Ibid., p. 19.

[45]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[46]Ibid., p. 25.

[47]Gazette, Sept. 25, 1852.

[48]Commercial, Oct. 1, 1852.

[49]Gazette, Oct. 2, 1852.

[50]Gazette, Oct. 16, 22, Nov. 2, 1852; Commercial, Nov. 2, 1852: Enquirer, Nov. 10, 1852.

[51]Catholic Telegraph, Nov. 13, 1852; Commercial, Nov. 9, 1852; Gazette, Nov. 9, 1852.

[52]Western Christian Advocate, Nov. 24, 1852.

[53]Catholic Telegraph, Nov. 13, 1852.

[54]E.g., Ohio Journal of Education 2 (1853): 160-61, 183, 234-40, 271-78, 311.

[55]Cf. Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of School Trustees and Visitors (1854), p. 34.

[56]Enquirer, Oct. 17, 1852.

[57]Gazette, Oct. 13, 1852.

[58]E.g., Catholic Telegraph, Sept. 30, 1847; June 22, 1850. More instances could be cited.

[59]Ibid., Feb. 26, Mar., 5, 12, 19, 26, 1853.

[60]Ibid., Feb. 5, 1853.

[61]Enquirer, Mar. 11, 1853.

[62]E.g., Western Christian Advocate, Jan. 26, 1853.

[63]Ibid., Mar. 2, 1853.

[64]Gazette, Mar. 16, 1853.

[65]Commercial, Mar. 15, 1853.

[66]Enquirer, Mar. 22, 1853.

[67]Catholic Telegraph, Mar. 5, 19, 1853.

[68]Cf. account of Senate discussion in Gazette, Mar. 11, 1853.

[69]Catholic Telegraph, Feb. 26, 1853.

[70]In one especially intemperate talk, Don Piatt, a wealthy convert, drew considerable fire in the religious and secular press by commenting that public schools raised children to "Commit murder for five dollars," and were "the devil's

nurseries." Both the Gazette and Western Christian Advocate quickly condemned Piatt's remarks as the worst sort of bigotry and insisted that the city's school laws were designed precisely to keep such men from control of common schooling. Cf. Gazette, Mar. 11, 1853; Western Christian Advocate, Mar. 23, 1853.

[71]Commercial, Mar. 26, 29, 1853.

[72]Ohio Journal of Education, 2 (1853): 160-61.

[73]Marvin J. Steffer, "Archbishop John B. Purcell, A Cincinnatian in Controversy." (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1964), p. 31; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," p. 365.

[74]Catholic Telegraph, Mar. 26, 1853.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., Mar. 19, 1853.

[78]Gazette, Mar. 26, April 2, 1853; Western Christian Advocate, Mar. 30, 1853.

[79]Commercial, Mar. 26, 1853.

[80]E.g., Commercial, Mar. 26, 30, April 4, 1853; Enquirer, Mar. 27, 1853; Gazette, Mar. 26, April 2, 1853.

[81]Enquirer, Mar. 24, 27, 1853.

[82]Catholic Telegraph, April 9, 1853.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Western Christian Advocate, April 13, 1853.

[85]Ibid., July 6, 1853.

[86]Enquirer, April 8, 1853. The issue for that day gives the voting totals by party for each candidate.

[87]Baughin, "Nativism in Cincinnati," p. 159.

[88]Cf. Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade (New York, 1930), pp. 300-303. The dramatic events surrounding Bedini's visit to Cincinnati are vividly narrated by Purcell in a lengthy letter to Cardinal Fransoni, the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Jan. 14, 1854. Microfilm of Propaganda Fide Archives, UNDA.

[89]Enquirer, Jan. 21, 1854.